



Testimony before the Labor Committee

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Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak and distinguished members of the Labor Committee, my name is Cheri Quickmire. I am the Executive Director of Common Cause in Connecticut. Common Cause is a nonpartisan, non-profit citizens' lobby that has worked to improve the way Connecticut's government operates since 1971. We have more than half a million members nationwide and 7,500 members and activists in Connecticut.

I am here in support of [Senate Bill 221 AAC Paid Family and Medical Leave](#). We are at a point in time when we are scrutinizing our life choices, our business opportunities and the future for our children and our planet. This bill is an important step to supporting family security and family wellbeing which can only help us as we struggle with other difficult choices.

In my estimation and experience we need to do a much better job on all of these. Today you are grappling with one of many challenges about priorities for families that I believe is necessary - paid Family and Medical Leave. As a mother who worked prior to and following the birth of my two sons I lived with a system that hasn't changed appreciably. I took six weeks leave both times and only two weeks were paid by my employer as long as I considered them vacation weeks. Having babies, as some may know, is a wonderful thing but I would never call the first two weeks of their lives a vacation! We did not have sufficient time to bond or adequate resources to take care of ourselves without returning to work. I did not have enough money to take additional time off and had to return to work before I was ready.

It is critical that we deal with workplace leave policies that leave people behind - the half of all workers in the country who are not covered under the Family and Medical Leave Act - essentially not protected if they take time off that they need to care for a seriously ill family member, a new baby or a medical emergency. Connecticut's FMLA initiation nearly 20 years ago was a very important act and it modeled what is a national standard today. It is time to update our plan in recognition of current challenges of raising and caring for children and aging family members.

The state of California has a Paid Family Leave program that provides up to 6 weeks of paid family leave for eligible workers, at up to 55% of their weekly earnings up to a maximum of \$1,075 per week.

New Jersey and Rhode Island also provide paid family leave for eligible workers and many other states are working on passing it.

Loss of income in stressful times should not be the rule - it should be an anomaly. The United States is the only advanced industrialized nation without paid family and or maternity leave and many countries also provide paid paternity leave. This is a common sense response to the reality that we as human beings are able to bond with our children, care for our elders and heal from any medical emergencies. Wage replacement up to \$1,000/week as called for in this bill is a critical component. This is good business. It encourages young workers and generates loyalty and less turnover among workers.

And it gives children the start they need in life as evidenced by many studies on the importance of secure bonding and attachment. The science has somewhat evolved but it is still recognized that the early time together with parent(s), family members gives children a tremendous advantage in education and positive behavioral health outcomes.

The time for paid Family and Medical Leave has come. I hope that Connecticut will continue to lead on this important issue of family security

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